Saturday 26th Dec 1953
Kure
A very happy New Year to you. Just now I felt as though it could write a book, and thought, well, why not? So I took a book and started to write, and this is it.
Well, to go back to my last short note to you, we came alongside as anticipated at 0900 and spent the remainder of the morning having a good clean up around the place in preparation for the next two days. Leave was granted from 1300 and all who could were ashore in a rush, all, that is, except the duty watch and a funeral cautious people like Skelly and myself. I washed and ironed a few things then slept for about two hours and was I thankful for it later on!
At 5 PM we went ashore into Kure and I got three crockery samples as promised. There is an eggshell cup, a Satsuma saucer, chipped a little, and a Noritake saucer. As they were “presento”, I made a “presento” of 40 cigarettes and the shop keeper and I parted company the best of friends. I have packed the three pieces in a box and will post them and the tablecloth I mentioned before FAO. I say FAO because the poor old postie has been run to a standstill these last few weeks and I don’t want to unnecessarily burden him.
Inside the lid of the box you will find a small sheet of white paper giving all the pertinent info, price ranges, design, quantities, so be careful when you unpack it not to lose it amongst the packing. I think you will find the price of crockery is better than that of the material samples I sent you. Incidentally, Betty Williams does know our secret so you can sign whichever way you please.
Also inside the box is a little box with an example of damascene work. As you will see, the design is beautifully worked but the “gold” holder is shoddy and spoil and otherwise lovely trinket.
Compacts and cigarette cases of this work are lovely for they are black with the gold and silver wire inlay only and have none of the imitation stuff around them as the brooch I am sending to you has. In the middle of this letter you will find a slip of paper explaining exactly how damascene

work is done. Quite an elaborate process, isn't it?
After I had taken the crockery I thought I had better buy something there as he appeared to have gone to some trouble to get the three different pieces, so I bought something for you. I intended to keep it as a surprise for you but I can't keep secrets. It is a musical jewellery box. You know the sort of thing: open the lid and it plays a tune. It has a mirror inside the lid, plush lining, a tray that is hinged and comes up as the lid opens and has three little compartments in it, and a special little compartment in the bottom for rings. It is dark red, almost brown with Oriental design and finished in lacquer. Quite charming I thought. I don't like sending it to you in the post as it might be damaged so I keep it and bring it home.
Next we had a meal at Kure House and then to the Fleet Canteen for a few quiet drinks. Here we met some British Army types who wanted 12 volunteers to come to the mess at Hiro, about 8 miles away, and help them get rid of a beer surplus, as they put it. We didn't like to refuse as they were quite pleasant about, it so we piled in a line of jeeps and twenty minutes later arrived at their mess.
In the centre of the room against one wall was a huge fireplace with a fire burning, there were Chinese lanterns, coloured lights, all the Xmas trimmings, and it seemed like a real English Christmas. Unfortunately it didn't snow.
To let things loosen up gradually a darts competition was started and for some unknown reason I was throwing well that night and came close to winning.
Next they put on their star turn, a piper in full kilts and two dancers, kilts also, did a couple of acts dancing around the crossed claymores. The three of them the three of them were mess members but in their regalia they looked like professional entertainers.
Just as they finished, along came the carol singers outside, so we all trooped out and joined in.
After they left, the singing mood persisted and we gathered around the piano and sang. But not carols. I still think the Navy knows naughtier songs than the Army. And more.

Next came a comedy turn and I happened to be the scapegoat. It happened like this.
I had just got myself a beer when the three army birds came up arguing, and one suddenly swung on me and said:
“What do you think?”
“Think what?” I countered.
“Well, we have a WO 2 in the mess here who says he can guess the weight of any man to within one pound.”
“That so?”
“Yes, and I think he can’t do it. What do you think?”
“Well, I think it probably could be done but it’s doubtful if he could get mine as I am deceptive when dressed.” (I walked right into the trap there and then.)
“OK, we’ll ask him to try. I’ve seen him do it time and again and I’ll bet ¥1000 he can do it,” said another.
Another type said, “Rot!” And in two ups [?] the mess was in an uproar and big bets were being laid. A table was cleared and money and betting slips were placed and I was beginning to realise that they meant it.
So along came the WO and we had a few words and he agreed that it was going to be difficult. However, would I write my weight on a piece of paper and put it on the table so no one could see it? I would and did. And would I sit on this stool right in the middle of the floor? I did.
He walked around me sizing me up, felt my ankles and legs, arms and chest, and then said, “Now, put your arms around my neck,” and when it I had done so he lifted me, hefted me a few times and put me back on the stool again. Then he considered me a little while longer and said, “Right. I’ve got you just about taped.” And, “Now when I lift you this time I want you to give a heave, sort of lift yourself as well. If you do that then that is half a pound my way and I’ll win. If you don’t, then that is half a pound against me and I’ll lose.”
So I put my arms around his neck again and the room was as quiet as a church. All of a sudden he said, “Now,” lifted me, I heaved and he sat me back on the stool again and the room rocked with laughter. For a second I

was puzzled until I realised that I had a very very wet sit upon. When he said “Now” and lifted, someone from behind slipped a beer tray full of icy water onto the stool. I think I laughed as much as the rest of them then, but spent a lot of the remainder of the night standing stern first to the fire. Talk about a wet arse and no fish.

Supper came on and it was beautiful cold roast pork and chicken, ham and dozens of different varieties of savouries. I ate enough for two I’m sure, for next morning I wasn’t the least interested in breakfast.

Come midnight and the piper picked up his pipes and we formed a long line behind him and walked around the mess then out into the sleeping quarters. On the way I acquired an empty beer bottle and a fire bucket, so as drummer I was elected to second position behind the piper. Cabin after cabin we entered, switched on the lights, pulled the occupants, if any, out of bed and stripped the bed and proceeded to the next cabin.

Back in the mess again and the CO, a Lt Colonel, announced he was leaving, made a short speech and stood back while the president responded. He said the usual nice things and finished up with: “And so, sir, on behalf of the mess and our Navy guests, I would like to say this, ‘How about another hour’s extension of time for the bar?’” And the old bloke just laughed and said, “Go ahead, you’d have it anyway.”

The party broke up, we filed into a 10 ton truck and the driver took us right on to the wharf. He wished he had his jeep as he could have taken us right on board and done the thing properly. He was quite peeved because no one had told him the gateway was too small for a 10 tonner.

One of our hosts insisted on accompanying us and brought with him a huge box of leftovers from supper which he was going to give to the duty watch. He made the top of the gateway and collapsed over a piece of rope, but he went down gallantly like a true soldier and didn’t spill a piece of the supper. The officer of the watch thank him and escorted him back to the truck and that was the last we saw of him.

All in all, a very successful Xmas Eve. But the next one will be better as I will be with you. Only another 364 days.

Xmas Day saw the ship in a state of chaos after 10 am. At 9 am we had a

church service in the hangers, after which Santa gave us our parcels. These parcels came with the compliments of the *Sun* Melbourne and contained 2 ounces of tobacco, papers, toothbrush and paste, razor blades, writing pad and envelopes, butterscotch and a plum pudding. Nice thought, wasn't it? Then there was a beer issue and the captain and all officers toured the ship wishing all the compliments of the season. In one mess the boys told the commander that he had dirtied the deck with his boots and would he scrub out or take punishment. He preferred the former, took off his coat, hat, collar and tie, shoes, socks, rolled his pants up while they got his bucket and hot water and brush, and he set to and scrubbed the mess. However, he said that as he had three rings on his arm, could he detail off someone to help him. They acquiesced and he made the navigator scrub the tables with a toothbrush.

Commander (S) had to scrub out the galley. While he was doing that the chief cook said he wasn't eating any Xmas dinner as he knew what was in it and brought his own with him, a live rooster complete with leather collar and string lead. The gunnery officer did his turn as wharf sentry, dressed in a bright array of clothes topped off with a bandsman's helmet while all along the ship's side sailors shouted orders at him.

The pipes that were made over the ships amplifier system were beauts. Some I couldn't repeat. A few were:

"Chaplain Weir and Father Ellis report to the implement store for a gratuitous issue of harps, hymn books and haloes size 13."

"The ship is expected to berth in Sydney 0900 16th July 1954."

"Correction to the last pipe, the ship will not berth in Sydney 0900 16th July 1954. The ship will berth in Sydney 0905 16th July 1954."

805 squadron radio boys collected a heap of worn out shoes, took them to 805's CO's cabin, marched in, dumped them on the middle of the deck with a piece of prose and walked out without saying a word. The substance of the prose was that it was expected that the boots and shoes would be polished and returned to the radio blokes within the hour by all 805's pilots and that it was hoped they would polish the shoes in a better manner than the way they flew.

In a few minutes a pipe was made: “All 805 pilots muster at the CO’s cabin with polishing gear at the double,” and before the hour was up, the CO and his pilots duly reported to the radio chaps with polished boots and stood in a group reciting a return piece of prose to the effect that it was hoped that the shoes and boots were polished to satisfaction, and that the standard of flying in the future would be improved. Then they, without further words, walked out also. This sort of rot went on all over the ship. Two lads borrowed officers’ uniforms and went across the wharf to a RN frigate, *Concord*, went into went into the ward room, had a drink, invited some of the officers aboard *Sydney* for a drink after lunch and left without anyone in *Concord* waking up.

Christmas dinner was roast turkey and all the trimmings and the cooks really excelled themselves. It was a beautiful meal.

After lunch I was all prepared to have another little snooze when Alwyn, Skelly, Ken, Chloe and Ron asked me to come ashore. I told them no and they told me yes so I went ashore to the Field Canteen. But it didn’t do them any good for I had about an hour’s sleep in a big armchair. I was glad I did for I met two chaps who I had not seen in six years and we talked like a pack of hens, reminiscing.

We went to Kure House for tea and the meal squashed all enthusiasm for a good night. By 9 pm I was in bed and fast asleep. Asleep until one of the lads came in strumming a guitar he had bought. He came close to wearing it.

Well, that brings us up to today. Boxing day.

It is now 1300 and I will spend the next four hours writing to you and doing a bit of ironing. A woman’s work is never done.

This evening I am going off again to buy you a doll and some badges for a new uniform which I shall buy soon.

The doll I am buying for you is Japanese and is a dressing table type. I think they are cute.

Do you know what I think? I think you are leading to hectic a life at the moment. Why? Because I have had three letters from you with 17 written on the back. I’m afraid you’ll just simply have to do better.

At Inchon as I have mentioned previously I received letters 18 and 21. Here I received letters 22, 23, 24 and 25 but no 19 or 20. I'm wondering what could have happened to them.
On the way to Hong Kong in the next few days I'll compose a letter to the minister. It will be interesting to note if he changes his manner towards you in any way.
Also at Inchon I received a note from my mother saying that she was going to Sydney for a few days and that she would drop in on you at the Merc. By then of course it was too late to warn you to be prepared to meet her so I just had to hope for the best.
Yes, she does gush a bit, but don't be deluded, for under that exterior she's as hard as nails and very shrewd. You can bet your bottom dollar that if she finds she doesn't like you she will tell you straight out.
In answer to your question, the correct thing to do is to send an invitation to which she will reply that she finds it impossible to attend. She would be as embarrassed as much as Pop and as she would be virtually on her own at the wedding I'm almost certain that she won't want to attend.
I would like her to be there but our happiness is our first consideration and an atmosphere of strain or nervous tension would not help. So before you send out the invitations I will ask her straight out what her intentions are and we can have the matter settled.
Now that you have met my mother I think I should fill in a bit more of the picture for you as I want you to know how I see things, and not base your opinions entirely on what other people have told you.
The mistake in the first place was made when Mum and Pop married. They should never have done so as they were two quite different people. Pop was staid, cautious and quiet; Mum full of fun. Pop would rather dig in the garden and read a book by the fire while Mum was keen on dancing and was quite a sportswoman. For quite a few years she played interstate tennis and on one occasion came close to being Australian champion.
At the time when I was born the Depression hit and Pop lost his job. The home had to be sold and for some time we, as millions of others did,

quietly starved, but while that helps to bind some families it caused rifts in others such as ours.
Then Pop took a job flying and for most of the time he was away, and Mum was left on her own to raise two squalling brats. This was when we lived in Queensland, where neither Pop nor Mum had any relations. If you can imagine me taking you to Adelaide, say, and then leaving you for 3 weeks every 4, you will know how Mum felt. It wasn't Pops fault, because he had to have some sort of job, money don't grow on trees.
It was during this time that they started to grow apart I think. Pop saw it and he threw up flying to come to Melbourne with a position in DCA, but by then it was too late.
They had been married 15 years then and in that time had lived in as many houses in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. That is no foundation for a successful marriage.
A little while after this the War broke out, our house was sold from under us and we moved again. Then my grandmother took ill and we moved to the ancestral home so Mum could look after her and it was from here that Pop joined the airforce and was away again.
All this time Pop's job took him all over Australia and Mum turned to her tennis again until it became part of her, more so in fact than her family, and though I couldn't see it at the time I can see now that she had to have some adult company and relaxation or go nuts. As she had moved around a lot she had made no lasting acquaintances and consequently when we returned to Melbourne she had to make new friends. So that by the time Pop joined the RAAF they were just two people living under the same roof by force of habit.
Just as you can't imagine your mother loving someone other than your father, so I felt when Mum told me she was going to seek a divorce from Pop, when she didn't want him but another man she had known through mutual friends, for some time. It's taken me about 10 years to get used to the fact.
However, once she had the divorce she found she liked her independence and has stayed that way since, despite the fact that the other man still

wants to marry her, even now after about 12 years.
Both Mum and Pop have found the right mate now but for Mum it is too late.
If you struggled this far then I'll continue with part two of the story it really is part two, for things were vastly different from then on.
My grandmother died and grandfather felt he wanted to get away from all associations with the past so he left the home never to return. As far as I know he ostracised Mum, as did the rest of the family, and went to live with one of his old cobbers at a beach suburb and is still there.
However, that left Mum with the house, me and the other man. His name isn't of importance to you so will just call him D. He was a builder by trade before the War put him partly out of action and he saw possibilities in the old home. It was a large weatherboard house with a slate roof on a big piece of ground in Caulfield quite near the station. The land is 85′ × 150′, it is a corner block, and the house area is 23 squares. The normal house is about 12 squares, a square being 100 square feet. So he got to work and urged Mum to buy the house and turn it into three flats. Well, with a bit of aid from Dick and me, Mum bought the house and they set to and turned it into three very comfortable self-contained furnished flats. From time to time I have put a little bit of cash into the house and most of my leaves from the Navy I have spent working there, for as you can imagine there is a lot of work to be done to keep a place like that in order, inside and out.
Well, now my efforts, such as they were, look like paying dividends. The place is getting too much for Mum to handle and for some time she has been looking for a suitable buyer for the house. A couple of weeks ago she found one, and as Dick and I are part owners she flew to Sydney to get his consent to sell, which he gave and signed the relevant papers, and then she posted the contract on to me to sign. At this stage it has not arrived but I should have it before we are very far into January.
Some time ago she wrote intimating her intentions and while we did not mention any figures she has asked me to accept all that I have put into the house in the way of hard cash together with interest, and I agreed to

this.
So providing the deal goes through, and there is no earthly reason why it shouldn't, you and I will be about £400 nearer own home. I hope.
I have explained all this in detail for two reasons. One is that I don't want you to be frightened or wary of Mum's attitude towards you, and if you can understand in some measure why she is like she is today, shrewd and hard, you will feel more at ease when next you meet. It is only the unknown element of any quantity that has us scared and if it is no longer unknown, then it is licked.
The other reason is that I want you to realise why it's so all-important to me to have a home, one home, with someone I love and know for the rest of my life.
It's hard for you to understand, because you have such a wonderful family, that there are times when I feel that Mum and even Pop are little more than casual acquaintances and that from the time I was 15 till a year ago or so ago I just didn't want to go home to either. I just wasn't interested. When I first went to Nowra just over three years ago, weeks used to go by before I had to force myself to come to Sydney.
Since then I have broadened my outlook and tried to be less of a stranger. What son do you know of who has never driven his father's car or borrowed money from his father? Actually, Pop tried to teach me to drive once in the Vaux[hall] and I borrowed some money (the last weekend before we were married) once, but that is all.
I am not in a depressed frame of mind writing this, and I'm not the neglected, ragged, loveless urchin looking for sympathy. If you know all these little things about me you will be able to understand me a little bit and perhaps make a few allowances for me if at odd occasions I go a bit quiet.
It is now 3:30 pm and I must do some ironing or I won't get ashore. I will finish this "book" on the way to Hong Kong.
Sunday 27th in the Inland Sea
We are at sea again but not for long this time as we reach Hong Kong next Thursday 31st. After that I don't know yet what is happening and

actually don’t care much at the moment. These last three days have been quite hectic and I feel quite exhausted, or as the ancient Greek philosophers used to say, buggered.
Last night Skelly, Chloe and I stepped off at 1700 and walked around the shops again for an hour and a half. As I said, I had intended to buy you a doll but couldn’t beat the price down enough to satisfy myself, so it will wait for a while. I did buy my gold badges for 23/9 which is quite reasonable for in Australia they would cost about 3 pounds.
As usual I saw more things that I would like and bought some. One or rather to lacquer bowls in a dark red with a couple of little fans painted on the lids. I tried to burn them with a lighted cigarette but could not, so they are good pieces. The pair cost ¥540 or 14/6. Another thing I got was a pencil box for butch. It is just a simple one, 4 movements to open it, and if it gets broken in the attempt then it doesn’t matter. I’m thinking of getting him a microscope as I have been forbidden to buy toys.
I also saw something which I will get next time here and that is, don’t laugh, a table. The one I have in mind is circular, about 3–4 feet diameter with detachable legs about 12″ long. It is made of cherry wood and looks quite charming. Something else I saw were lacquer trays, quite cheap and rather attractive.
After our shopping we retired to Kure House for a meal and then to the Fleet Club to watch the floor show. Apart from one excellent juggling act it was mainly legs and singing. The crowd was disappointed because there was no strip tease.
The club is right on the water’s edge and as we were leaving, one of the motor boats from the ship was about to depart for the ship also, so we thumbed a lift back. Infinitely more comfortable than riding in these queer three-wheeled taxis on their rotten roads.
We shipped and proceeded to sail again this morning at 0800 and shortly after, mail was distributed and I received number 26 from you and an ordinary letter and a registered letter from Mum and a couple more Xmas cards, making a total of 18. Charming.
I’ll answer your letter first because it’s the best and then tell you about

the others.
I'm glad you like the pyjamas. I was a bit worried in case they weren't quite acceptable. I guess there is no need to warn you about washing the scarf. Usually in these sorts of things the dye runs quite a lot.
I think Lesley ought to go out with someone else for a little while. Boris sounds to me like a mother's pet used to having everything done for him and giving little in return, and badly in need of a swift kick in the stern-sheets. I may be quite wrong and unjustly criticising the man but that's just how he strikes me.
As we won't be back in Japan for about another six weeks I won't be able to get your material till then unless I can find it any cheaper in Hong Kong.
Well, the letter I have from Mum tells me that the house has been sold. A deposit has been made and the balance will be paid when I sign the contract of sale and forward it to the solicitors. The deal will take at least a month from now to be finalised but the house does not have to be vacated before March 20th. In that time Mum will be looking for a small house to buy, somewhere in one of the small towns in the Dandenong Ranges north of Melbourne.
My share, now our share, of the cash from the sale is dependent upon the final figure, solicitor's or agent's fees and so on but will be a little more than I figured on, and that is around £500. I don't expect the cheque for about 3 months but when it arrives I'll endorse it and send it to you to put into your bank. We are going to have our own home in next to no time.
This brings me to two other things. One is my Will. Naturally I had to make provision for Mum in the Will I made just after we left Australia because she was to a certain extent dependent on what I had invested in the home. The sale of property has changed that, so in a registered envelope I am posting you another one from Hong Kong and which you can put away. Don't lose it for many people would pay thousands for my signature, ha!
The other thing, for which you are going to say nasty things, is that I have a lot of junk in the old home and it has got to go somewhere when mum

moves. A lot of it will be useful to us and to me so I am suggesting to Mum that she pack it all up and consign to Guildford COD
I would suggest you have it picked up and take it home. Amongst it there will be things for your trousseau, towels, lace and such, so when you get it, take out what you want, pack the rest up again and store it till I return when I can sort out what I want to keep. Don't be the least surprised at anything you come across for in my years of travelling I have picked up all sorts of queer things.
Had it not been for the fact that Pop and Nance are moving I would have asked him to look after it but he will have enough to do without worrying about my gear. Mum won't want to be worried with it so I am at a bit of a loss to know what to do. If you don't want to pick it up would you arrange for it to be picked (out of with [?]) up and stored, please. I hate to bother you like this but I don't know what else to do about it.
In her letter Mum said some very nice things about you and I know she is sincere. Also she was taken with your father and said he had a most natural and engaging manner.
As I thought, she would like to come to our wedding but under the circumstances is going to decline the invitation. She wants us to write and tell her all about it and also wants a photo to keep. That won't be difficult to arrange.
The registered letter contained the relevant papers for me to sign but I won't be able to post them till we reach HK. However, there is no immediate hurry for them.
So much for that.
In our mess we go through our cups like bulls in a china shop and there is always a shortage. For my part I overcame this shortage by buying a mug in Kure last time. It is about half a pint capacity of good china with a very pretty design of blossoms and mountains etc. painted on. Quite distinctive in fact. This time in Kure no less than 15 have been bought, 12 to send home and 3 to use in the mess by various members and I am quite peeved. No one is going to know about my table when I buy it.
One of the chaps bought a collapsible gramophone and at the moment we

are being entertained by Japanese records. The gramophone folds up to a size 6″ × 9″ × 2″. Cute, isn't it?
The supply of news for the day is about finished, so for now I'll say bye again.
Monday 28th
Just a few lines tonight, as I have spent most of the evening composing a letter to the minister and one to mum. The first took me ages and I haven't finished the other yet.
Believe it or not, I spent the whole day in shirt-sleeves. It's been quite warm and I think we must have been enjoying some of your heat.
It could be that I'm callous (?), used to life and death, or just innocent because I want to see the effects of this fire in Kowloon and my only feelings are keen interest. No compassion at all, but when I do see, perhaps my feelings will be different.
In one of your recent letters you mentioned that you had told John that we are married and asked my forgiveness. I can't say that I knew that John had been told for there was no way I could have known, but even as a non-gambler I would have bet on it and I'll bet that Bobby knows also. To me this means, not that you trust them, so much as you love them. I can trust Dick but I wouldn't tell him, for although we have a strong regard for each other, because we have trodden so many different paths, that little extra something that is between you and John and Bobby does not exist between Dick and me. Even so, I can quite realise why you did. As for asking my forgiveness, I'll reiterate what I said in one of my first letters to you. No matter what you do, or say, or think ever, nothing will give me cause to censure you. I am your husband and you are my wife and together we are going to build a happy and successful future. You are not going to help me build my house and bear me my children. We are going to build <u>our</u> home and have <u>our</u> family. We are in it together, giving as much and taking as much as each other, and the essence of success I think lies in us having absolute trust and confidence in each other. I feel that way about you, and I know that you feel the same way about me, otherwise you would not have consented to marry me. And so, whatever it

is, you have no need to ask my forgiveness, for I'll stand by you to the utmost. If it is about something you are uncertain of, then I would like to feel you would want to tell me. The past is buried but the future concerns us equally.
There is a page and a half of writing there and it can be condensed into a few words: I love you, my dearest. Good night.
Tuesday 29th
The atmosphere aboard today is a little strange. At about 1100 a Fury a mile or so ahead of us suddenly burst into flames and plummeted straight into the drink. The 'copter was at the spot in a matter of a minute or so and the destroyer escort *Concord* steamed up just after. Sea boats were lowered and searched for about an hour but all that was recovered was the pilot's helmet and a part of the seat. Three months ago in [the] UK this pilot's brother, also a pilot, was killed in an air accident. I wonder what his parents did to deserve this? This afternoon we had a short service on the flight deck, and in the captain's address it transpired that his fiancée's sister was his brother's widow. It makes me wonder.
There is a radio bod aboard, Stan Hubbard, who has a wife and a young son. His wife decided after Stan had left that she wasn't going to sit at home and do nothing so she moved out of Melbourne into the country near Warburton and rented a house, large, on a piece of land, about 3 acres for 10/- a week. Stan was displeased because she was out in the scrub and far, far from home, and virtually alone. She then built a fowl run and bought 12 layers, and started to grow vegetables. In the meantime, Stan was still performing. "Always was a backwater. Why can't she stay civilised?" And apparently told her as much. She replied saying she had bought a goat. Thinking he could have a dig at her he asked why a goat and not a cow. Her reply was that goat's milk was better for the baby and anyway with her profit from the eggs and vegetables, which she sells locally, she had bought a cow. Still trying to convince her that it wasn't a suitable life he said that it was unsafe because prowlers might come around. So she bought two fox terriers.
The last straw was when his young son brought home an eighteen inch

brown snake—alive. He is now quite convinced that his family are building a menagerie and simply says, “A man can’t win.” My sentiments exactly. A father is twelfth man in any family.
I have just remembered a couple more points about the crockery. The crockery is packed in boxes, not weighing more than, I think, 11 lbs, and the freight for each is ¥100. A 56 piece set goes into 7 boxes, a 93 piece into 13 boxes. This is over and above the prices quoted on the list in the sample box but includes insurance. The firm guarantees to deliver complete, whatever is purchased, and any breakages will be replaced free of charge.
There is no trouble buying this crockery, so if Lesley or any of the Burd girls or any one else would like any, ask them to send me the relevant info + cash and it will be as good as done. I can’t, or rather I don’t want to, buy anything else for people other than you or your mother or Nance, as it whittles down the quantity I can bring and send to you. Crockery, however, is, or appears to be, duty-free.
On New Year’s Day we will have been married 11 weeks and almost ⅓ of our time apart will be behind.
Today has been warm again. I can’t get over it.
I didn’t mention it before but when we arrived in Hong Kong last time I discovered that my watch coat had been stolen. Bad enough at any time but as we were to expect cold weather it was worse for I thus had no coat. You will remember when I wrote from Inchon I said I wore a duffel coat off. I kept quiet about it and reported it missing but I kept my eyes open for it. However, it did not turn up so I let it be known around that I was going to have all chiefs’ and POs’ messes searched, that I would recognise when I saw it because of the way the buttons were sewn on and because I had my name in the lining of the pockets. The day we arrived back in Kure Xmas Eve, there it was in the locker again, strangely enough in excellent condition still. This sort of thing goes on throughout the ship at intervals and most of my clothes I have on board are nearly in rags. One shirt is, no, two shirts are, seven years old, and I’m sure some of my singlets I wore to school. But to wear these sorts of clothes is the only

way to be certain of having something to wear at all. Socks. There must be nearly 15000 black socks in this ship and so they don't last long if they are new. Now do you see why I patch them? Then there is the water. The water is condensed seawater, absolutely pure but being contained in iron tanks and running through iron pipes it inevitably collects rust. One of my sheets has dozens of huge rust spots, as have a lot of my other clothes. If you saw what I sometimes wear you'd disown me. Anyhow, who's to see in these places. If someone does they don't take any notice for they are either people living in the same conditions or Chinese, Japs and what have you.

Wednesday 30th

Duty tonight so I'm liable to drop the pen and shoot off somewhere at any moment.

Funny incident in the mess at lunchtime today. Listening to the tennis when the phone rang. John Sherwood grabbed it and said "Deuce" instead of "G2 mess". He almost blushed.

The provisional program for the next week is out and we look like staying in Hong Kong till the 11th. During that time the ship's side will be painted and the ship stored again.

On the 27th we finished our six weeks as duty carrier, which means that for the 42 days after the 27th we will be in the vicinity of HK. That is until towards the end of that time when we will be heading north again for the Japan area ready to take over as duty carrier again on February 8th. Another 42 days from then as duty carrier takes us to March 22nd and 42 days from that date takes us to May 3rd. If we do another patrol after that it means that we will finish it on or about the 14th June and be home early July. If we don't do this third patrol it means we will be home early June. Normally a ship does 12 months on a commission such as this but a carrier is different for it depends on the aircrews as to how long they can keep up with the intensive flying programmes that are carried out. A third patrol thus means 30 weeks flying and somehow I can't see it. I'm sorry I can't tell you to set a definite date, and while I don't want you to set one and then have me turn up after it, I don't want to come home and

fool around for weeks waiting. So could you leave it as long as possible and then if I am still in the dark, make it June in the hope that I will be home that month? I've never been married before so I don't know how easy it is to change dates that have been set. If it won't upset things too much I think June would be the date to bank on.

On your side of the church you may be strong on relations but I bet I have more sailors than you. Four in the mess told me that they are coming so don't be surprised if we get a Japanese tea set or something. They said they were going to bring along "middle watch" mugs to drink out of just to see me perform. When you have decided on how many invitations you are going to send out, let me know how many you want me to invite and I'll send you the names and addresses.

Time has beaten me. The mail closes in five minutes so I'll have to close. Anyhow, it wasn't a bad effort.

Tomorrow I'll write again in answer to more of your mail (I hope). Until then, my beloved, all my fondest love.

Your devoted husband

George XXX